

# **HOLDING MY OWN**

ART & POETRY BY LGBTQ PRISONERS IN TEXAS

Brought to you by:  
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*“It’s my hope that my story will inspire you to become more active in prison rights and be our voice so our pleas for help will be heard!”*

— Vanessa

We would like to take this space to include a disclaimer/**trigger warning**  
- Please be aware that some works in this publication depict images, ideas or language that some may find stressful or traumatic, such as **violence and depression in various forms**. Please take care of yourself while reading this zine; self-care is very important!

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## **WELCOME TO “HOLDING MY OWN,” A ZINE**

composed for and by LGBTQ prisoners currently incarcerated in the Texas prison system. This project is a response to the anticipated Trans Prisoner Day of action, which calls for a greater effort to raise awareness around prisoner’s struggles, to connect people inside and outside of prisons, and to promote non-criminalized identities and personal expressions.

By creating this zine, we sought to highlight and share the struggles, passions, and abilities of LGBTQ prisoners in Texas through their artwork, poems, and essays.

January 22, 2016 marks the first Trans Prisoner Day of Action, an internationally recognized day of solidarity with trans prisoners.

Per the website [www.transprisoners.net](http://www.transprisoners.net): “This project was first imagined by Marius Mason, a trans prisoner in Texas, USA. Since then, through his friends and supporters, an international collective of people both inside and outside of prison walls have come together to make Trans Prisoner Day of Action a reality.

This is a call to action against the system which seeks to erase our very existence. The survival of trans and other sex and gender minority people is not a quaint conversation about awareness, but a struggle for us to live in a world so determined to marginalize, dehumanize, and criminalize us – especially trans women, and especially Black, brown, and indigenous trans people.”

So who are the people behind this zine you are holding in your hands?

MonkeyWrench Books is an all volunteer, collectively run radical info-shop and community space in Austin. Among the many groups that meet here, Austin Anarchist Black Cross (ABC) hosts a weekly letter-writing night to prisoners, as well as creating educational content and advocacy against the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC). We define a prisoner as anyone who is imprisoned within the confines of an illegitimate, oppressive system or structure. These structures and systems include, but are not limited to: the PIC, the capitalist system and the inequality it breeds, institutionalized and socialized homophobia, sexism, racism, hierarchy, and classism, and the prison of coercion. As a prison abolition collective, the Austin Anarchist Black Cross wishes to abolish all prisons and institutions that wish to incarcerate free and autonomous individuals. The Austin ABC collective believes in a consensus-based community and life for all people.

With that said, all we did was write this convoluted introduction, format and print the pages. *The amazing content is entirely by our friends on the inside.* We made the decision to digitally transcribe the essays and poems for formatting purposes, as well as to make the content as accessible as possible. We transcribed these materials exactly as is, to represent each person to the best of our abilities.

After sending between 50-60 calls requests for submissions, we received comparatively few responses. We would like to acknowledge that letter correspondence can be difficult for inmates, as writing materials can be inaccessible and guards often tamper with letters. Although we tried our best to represent all the voices to the best of our abilities, we recognize that this edition is neither all-inclusive nor complete. Hence, we are happy to continue accepting submissions so that a second edition can be compiled later in 2016.

All correspondence for this project, and information about our organization can be directed to:

Austin ABC  
c/o Monkeywrench Books  
110 North Loop Blvd E  
Austin, TX 78751



## **LETTER, NOV. 19<sup>TH</sup> 2015**

*by Vanessa*

As a transwoman in prison, I can attest to the abuse we deal with every day, Not only from inmates; but from guards too!

I have been in prison close to 11

flat years. I'm soon to be 38 in Feb 2016. I was certified as an adult at the age of 16 for agg, robbery. When I turned 17 yrs. old, I came to prison which was one of the scariest

moment in my life because I was instantly attacked!

I grew up dealing with abuse. It was nothing new. I was raped when I was 8 years old, and growing up, I stayed in fights because being different was hard as hell! In a insane way, This made me mentally tough! But prison shook me to my core! I never experienced nothing like this or the level of abuse.

True enough being raped is brutal—but I had never been beaten so bad in my life!

My first day in prison I was beaten and stomped bloody by gang members who were determined to force me to pay protection and to force me into prostitution!

I know I fought 6 to 8 people back to back—The harder I fought, the worse I was beaten!

I was a kid! My first day in prison—I had sex—with 3 people. It's sick! I was still bloody! My mouth was bleeding, my chin was split and my eyes were swollen and they still wanted to have sex with me!

The whole time I fought—I remember saying over and over; go Fuck yourselves!

But I gave in! I was exhausted mentally and physically. This older Mexican inmate told them to get off me, and let him talk to me. He basically told me: you have a choice—you can either get in line or this will continue!

I thought my best way to survive would be with him, He was in a prison gang called TS. But it wasn't for long he was trying to share me with his home boys!

Fortunately my mother came to see me! When she seen how bloody I was beaten, she went into a rage! She was crying and demanded to see the warden. They naturally put her off—but told her I'd be Ok.

The next day I was placed in safe keeping.

Although this was 22 years ago, Rape still happens and it's a fact that trans women are more at risk than any other prisoner because we are the closest thing to a real female and it makes it dangerous for us!

The would not happen if prison officials would create policies that allowed us to be kept separately or housed with other transwomen!

I believe there is no consensual sex in prison! Especially if it's done under duress or intimidation. A lot of cases, rape does not occur by violence. The threat of being hurt is usually the way it happens. Or a transwoman can be in a place with 2 or 3 inmates and they will pressure her into having sex.

I encourage all girls to have a walk partner—someone to be with them at all times, and to report all abuse!

TDCJ has become zero tolerance for sexual assault and it has made prison safer.

Since I have been in prison I have tried to commit suicide 3 times. Coping with my dysphoria has been extremely difficult for me! For years TDCJ would not treat me because I was not diagnosed in society or on Estrogen.

Due to policy change and

abusing myself—I have been on Estrogen and other medication to help me cope with my Gender dysphoria. I'm still being denied treatment! My doctor at UTMB Kevin McKinney prescribed me the real-life experience and recommended that I be allowed to live full time as a female and to have the items to live as a female.

The Doctor on my unit denied my Doctor's orders! Sadly! His

name is; Dr. Greene. He doesn't even specialize in GID treatment!

It's my hope that my story will inspire you to become more active in prison rights and be our voice so our pleas for help will be heard!

*Love ya  
Vanessa, TX*

## **PREDESTINE**

*by Jermaine Hicks*

Night has loosed,  
Lifes conclusion  
and fear has set its toll.  
Upon the man,  
who fears the sand  
Who's body has become so cold.  
Before the leaping out,  
The angel shouts!  
The man lacks to understand  
So he tightens his grip,  
So his soul won't slip  
Into what seems to be the plan  
But from his lips,  
he lost the gift,  
as these words were slowly  
spoken:

you close your eyes  
The wind blows by  
and you heart is instantly  
Broken.

(Death)

## I'VE LIVED

by Bubba

Ive lived thru prison where the days are long  
and to many day of being alone  
Ive lived thru the drugs Ive lived thru the booze  
always knowing I was bound to loose  
Ive lived thru life, Iv lived thru death  
and I always wondered what was left  
Ive lived thru the goodtimes and the bad  
But the times I spent with you are the best Ive ever had  
You were the one and only I wish my love to give  
You may stop loving me by my love or you will live  
live, live







Golden Fronted Woodpecker Done with color pencils and watercolor.

## **BARBED WIRE**

*by Marius Mason*

One day in the prison yard, the resident grey cat chased heedlessly  
A bird, who'd landed on the roof, all enclosed with steely swirls  
And slipping through the curling razor wire, stalked  
Until it caught her leg and stopping  
Shaking as it sliced her paw..open..raw  
The sharp barbs cutting fur and muscle, white and wounded to the bone  
Blood dripping down the eves, yowling  
And the bird forgotten, gone  
Took so long a summer healing, that we wondered  
If the fabled nine were used and done  
But she survived and still sleeps the afternoon in sun, these days  
Listening to the radio this morning in my cell,  
ear to the wind and the wild world outside  
All walls and razor wire, comes the rolling distant thunder  
Of masses on the move, rivers of refugees  
Each person fleeing worse and much worse behind them  
Where everywhere is war  
And those few wealthy nations, crossed arms close their gates  
Spew tear gas and water cannons, raise up more walls  
And I cannot help by wonder  
As the thousands push their way through daily  
Who will be cut, and who will bleed  
And who will get away  
To survive this and find the sun again  
Somewhere, someday

## **UNTITLED**

*by Freddie Fountain*

There is strength I say in sorrows known  
whether blind, of mind or intent  
Quite truer still of losses don  
nor-in how harsh or mint  
We find of use within it be  
a tool of sorts indeed  
Or err an arc of sight unglee  
The filler in the bead...

MERRY



CHRISMAS



SUPER BUNNY BUN

## **SAY IT LOUD— “WE'RE LGBT AND PROUD!”**

*by Michael Collier*

Recently a hetro inmate said after seeing a magazine picture of a same sex male couple kissing on their wedding that “if that's whats going on in the world,” he's glad he's locked up. These types of heterosexuals are the LGBT community's worst enemy. When our sex doesn't gratify them were frowned on as dirty queers.

Moreover, in prisons, where through gangs and violence attitudes of fear and distrust are set up against LGBT inmates. Thus enforcing a homophobic prison culture which spills over to the grassroots of society when the programmed prisoners go home.

Consider too how the systemized

hatred of the LGBT community enforced by the gangs in our prisons in fact serves the will of the state. The state fears inmate relationships which be and are strengthened by sex. Through religious and other programming as well as a blind eye when possible to violence, the state adds to the homophobic attitudes which are prevalent within the walls.

An in your face response is the way to address the problem. The best answer is a strong one. I'm proud of being a bi-sexual man. There's nothing dirty about our love and if you don't like it, look the other way.

## **THE VAMPIRE SPEAKS...**

Take note that there exists LIES  
 Lies that we are told  
 Lies that we tell others  
 Lies that we tell ourselves  
 but worse than all of these...  
 are Lies that we... believe.

**...NOW SPOKEN**

# **LOOK UP!**

*by Dushaan Gillum*

We overcome fear  
through love,

love... for those  
who love us, and  
those who hate

Do you know  
that we're here  
For a reason?

Do you know  
your reason  
For being?

It's easy to hate  
and to hide,  
but  
It's POWERFUL to hope!

I need you  
to take your past  
and your pain  
then use it all  
as fuel

burn and  
blaze, baby!

live and  
love, baby

reach and  
touch

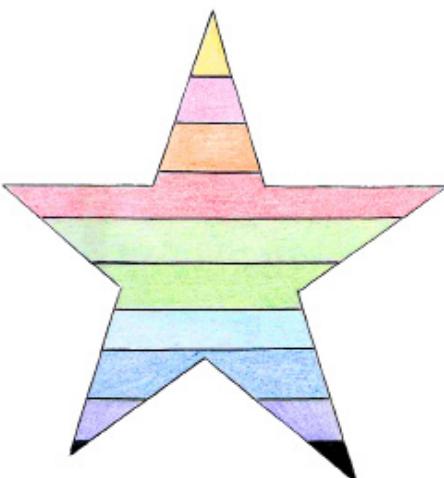
trust,  
that just being you  
is enough!

I need you  
to take your hardship  
and your heartbreak  
then use it all  
as motivation  
to make a difference

Do you know  
that you are loved?

Do you believe  
in US?

Keep looking up!



## **BLUE DEPRESSION**

*by Riccy Don Schorovsky*

Tryin to find the outlet to stop this pain, as my nights are lonely and dark. My mind hurt's and my vision only let's the selfishness see past what not's real. There are time's for everything but nothing changes im being pulled down and dragged as i call for help, life of a gangsta is lonely and shot, we who thug and suffer all at the same time, every instrument of love requires to be made by experience. And being hurt along the way will show you how gentle is deception when your heart is on the line. For you can't help who you love, only the past has the power to change your love you will see yourself fall from grate heights so confused was i that lay near death. Whether imagining or dreaming or having a vision or daydream it seem's to me that, truly cupid had remove my heart and im only leaft with memories more are killed by word's of the mouth than by the sword for these words

i write have never been seen, my enter thought's are for few but only the one. Who hold's my heart and looked in my eyes. No known what i feel has me scared for i am a man. A image of Allah. But yet i find myself, hurt, scared, alone, tryin to find what heart i have leaft. Some thing happen for reason's. Only them, self will know. I sometime's cant see why i'm not loved. Feeling the passion and the sweet love of my other half i haven't found. Im pushed to belive im ment to be alone not sharing my affection an the wisdom ive gotten along the way. Theres time's when i thought like a child had many hour's to see what's next to be changed, because "dishonor is never forgotten and honor must take precedence over love sensual gratification" for that love manifest in appearances. Captivating love that for with i brun in daily. I can't understand why my heart is lost and my mind is tired.



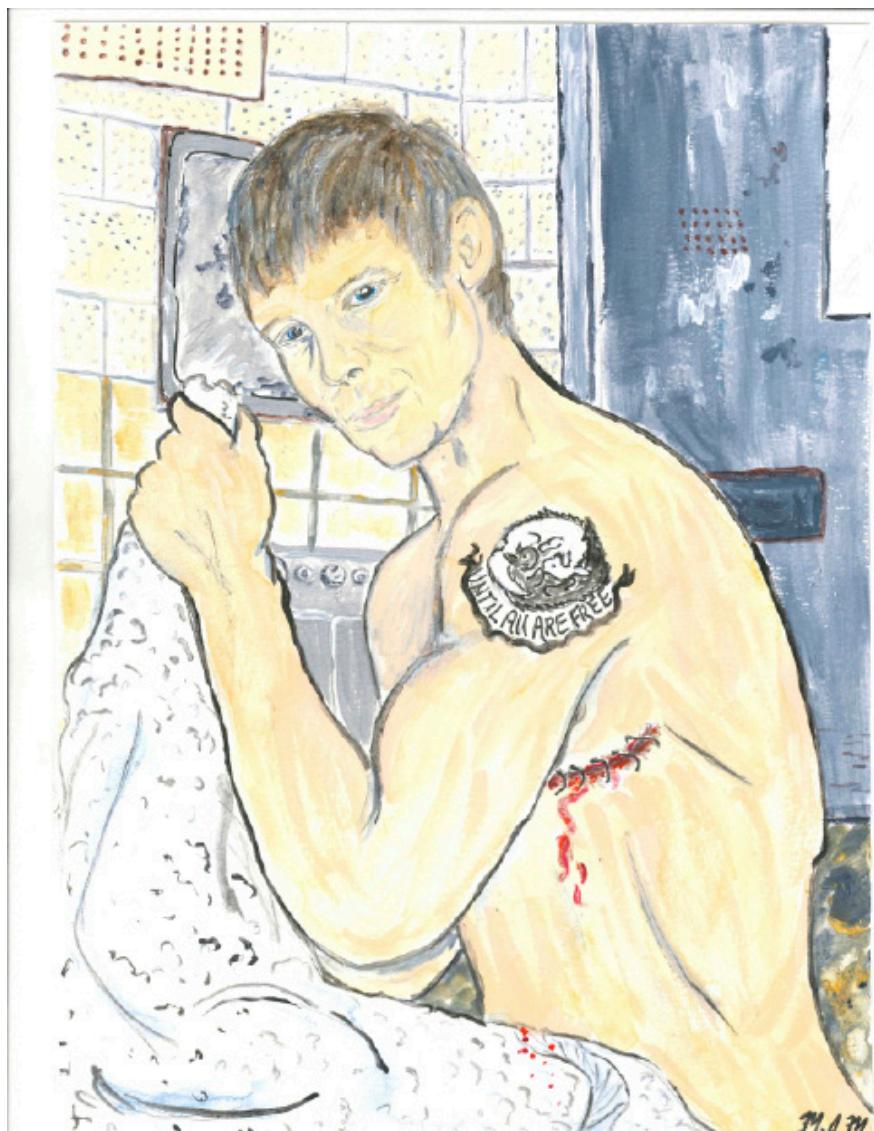
A wolf out in the snow lookin' for food and is hidden behind some trees. Done with color pencils, water color and pencil.



## **DISASSEMBLED HOPE**

*by Bubba*

Disguised luminaries in the hidden corners of my mind  
my disassembled hope - I'll try to define  
Substance of things hoped for- evidence of things not seen  
The suffocating sense of hopelessness  
In the realities of a self induced dream  
not giving possibilities to undeniable thoughts  
hoping for but not finding it in the hallmark  
of someones heart.  
a paramar [sic] you look for in the fantasies of a dream  
unable to see it - because your mind can't escape the dreams  
Who did I give the power to disassemble my hope?  
My family and mind they took from me  
then eloped...



# MY LIFE IS IN DANGER

*by Joe Salazar*

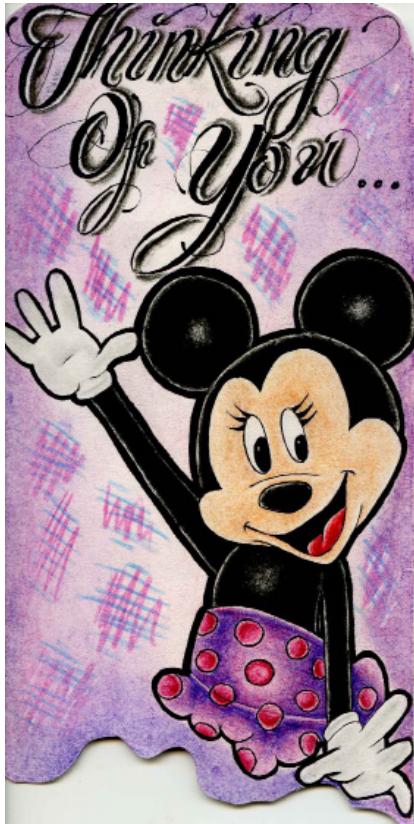
I am seeking to be placed in Safe keeping under the Federal Law of the 8th and 16th Amendments! Which states: Offender need not wait to get assaulted in order to obtain Relief.

I would like to file this L.I.D. in order to Resolve a serious problem(s), I am Requesting Safe Keeping (A Non-Active Unit) due to the facts that I been having on going problems with enemy's in General Population.

My life has been in Danger for Reasons of being labeled a stubborn. It all started in March of 2003 (at the Robertson Unit) I got clicked on by four members of the "Tango Blast." One of the Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth and San Antonio. Because I sold them a Guard who was smuggling weed and packs of smokes. But the Tango's never paid me for the officer. So I told officer Lozano to stop dealing with them. For that a lot of money and drugs was short handed and lost, which led for me to get clicked on Real bad.

(some photos were taken at the time of the beating)

I got transfer to Teleford Unit where I was Recognized. Word got to the Tango's Blast about me being a Stubborn. So they were talking about putting a hit on me. So I fled from May 2003 till March 19th 2004. I intentionally got cases to



have myself put in S.P.C.R (Lock Down 24/7) in hopes to get away from the enemys. I had words with Offender Riojas, Joseph (A member of the San Antonio Gang) At that time I try'd to stabb Offender Riojas through the cell front. And again later on, I attempted to stabb him face to face on my way to the chow hall. I got AD/SEG for a 13 inch shank before I could use it on him.

After years in AD/SEG I got Released to Beto Unit in March 24th 2006. Then five months later I stabbed Offender Robert Sams. In Aug 15th 2006 because he had



Recognized me and told the Tango's about me being a Stubborn and he also made up a Rumor (lie) about me being an ex-member of the Mexican Mafia (which I am not!) If you back track My Record, I was doing time with Offender Sam in Robertson Unit from 2001/2003.

While my stay at the Beto Unit Tango's gave me some time to come up with some of the lost money, which was short handed. But Mexican Mafia wouldn't cut me no slack. They said I was making their family look weak by the lies & Rumors that Sams started. He lie saying I was an ex-member of the Mexican

Mafia & that I was a Stubborn. So the family pressured me to shank Offender Sams, OR they were going to put a hit on me.

The on this Unit (Ferguson) I arrived with two bus loads with AD/ SEG Offenders from the Beto Unit (11-7-07) Those Offenders who are enemies of the Mexican Mafia & Tango's the word about why I had Stabbed some body. They made threats towards me. In the Results I stabbed another Offender. (Sept 24th 2008) That Offender was Antonio Jones, who is a member of the Mandigo Warrior. He was paid & doing favors for the Mexican Mafia.

For that Mandigo Warrior made my enemy's list, because I shanked one of them. (Antonio Jones) Also the Offender Sams who I tabbed at the Beto Unit, is a member of the Crips. Since I stabbed him, too, Crips has made my enemy's list as a well-next to the Mexican Mafia, Tango Blast, San-Antonio & the Mandigo Warrior.

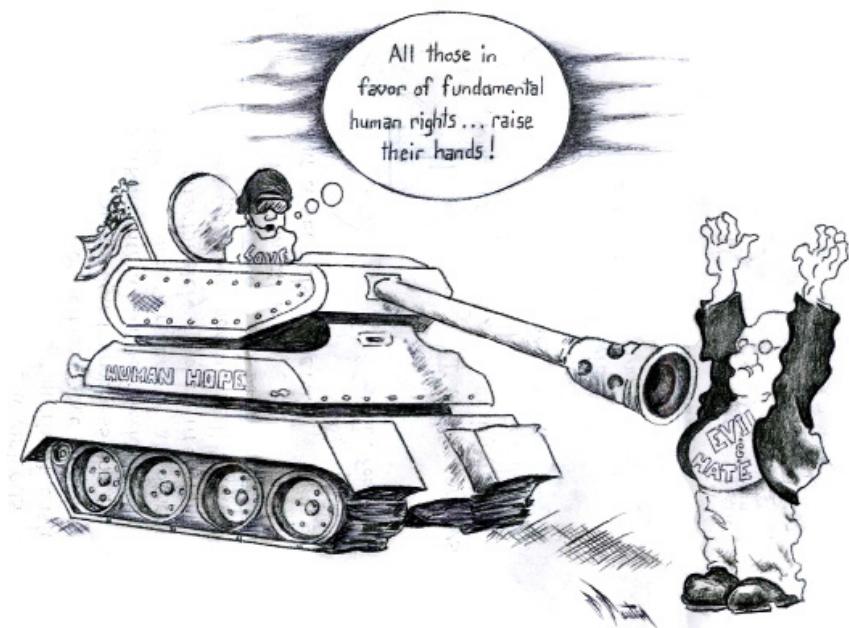
Then as of recently, (7-2-14) I was extorted for my multi outlet plug - Since I don't have money to pay for protection. So I handed over the plug in order to stay out of trouble. This situation has been brought to Ms. Standley's Attention who forwarded my I-60 to Safety Prison Officer Alverado. He Refused to investigate this issue. I have Ms. Standley's note with her signature proving she notified him. Yet he failed to do his job. Then on the 7th (July 2014) we got shook down for a 90 day lock down. I've explained

my situation to Sgt. Rappolle, who then confiscated the plug and returned it back to me. Therefore she is a witness that Jason Ryder had my xtorted property in his cell.

Please realize this has been an on going problem from unit to unit. My enemies (Tango's & Families) are state wide and have cell phones to look me up at any unit I go to. So understand that when I go to General Population it is "very possible" I will end up dead. As of

this year two inmates were killed, by the same people who are after me. I know Ms. Hall of State Classification, had told me she wants me murdered by my enemies. So under Federal Law of the 8th and 14th Amendments it is TDCJ Responsibility to place me in Safe Keeping.

The Head Warden of Ferguson can be held accountable/ in contempt for allowing corruption through failed duty.



# **LETTER, JAN. 2016**

*by Vanessa*

25

It is my profound hope that this zine will draw attention to TDCJ's harsh policies and lack of health care policies that deny transgender inmates the care we badly need to be able to live a healthy life while in prison.

Many of you are aware that Gender dysphoria is a serious medical condition that can cause a person to commit suicide and self-castration.

In fact, an October 2010 study done by the National Center for Transgender Equality found that 41% of transgender people in the US have attempted suicide, compared to a rate of 1.6% for the general population.

There has never been a study done of the rate Transgender people who have committed suicide or attempted suicide while in prison. However, I'm certain that the rate is extremely high because every transgender women I know and a lot of gay people I have met, have attempted suicide!

I have been in prison close to 22 years!

The abuse we live with everyday is unconstitutional! Being forced to live as a man is mentally devastating and the damage it causes to our mental health will affect us for the rest of our lives!

Everyday the guards intentionally call me: sir. How are you doing? I know it's done out of spite and to hurt me. But I just smile and try to educate them by explaining who I'm as a person, and the struggles

I deal with. Usually, once I do this, the guard sees me from a different perspective.

But still, this wrong! The reason the guards do this is, because they are not appropriately trained to work with transgender women or people!

I have had guards tell me: you are a man and that's how I'm going to treat you!

Just recently the Doctor on my unit—Dr. Greene—told me: I will never treat a man as a woman!

I was talking to him about the real-life experience that my primary physician at UTMB prescribed me.

He went on to tell me "As long as I have been a Doctor I have never granted a "man" a pass to live as a female and I'll never do it!"

He dragged out never so it sound like: Neveeeeer!

What is more disturbing is Dr. Greene is not a GID specialist and he has never treated Gender dysphoria, yet he is allowed to veto my Doctor's recommendation—who is a GID specialist simply because he does not believe I should be allowed to live as a female!

I'm currently have a law suit in Federal court about this.

Recently, TDCJ started providing us with Estrogen therapy and testosterone therapy. This is a major improvement and victory. However, TDCJ does not have a Health care policy in place to adequately treat transgender inmate according to the standard of care.

The World Professional

Association for transgender health care recommends that transgender people be allowed to live full time as their gender and to express their gender. This also applies to prisons, jails, etc.

I have strived for years to get TDCJ to create a comprehensive health care plan for transgender inmates that would address the most serious issues that affects every aspect of our lives:

1. appropriate mental health care by Gender specialist,
2. Train the medical staff to deal with transwomen and our unique medical problems,
3. to allow transgender inmates to have appropriate gender hygiene items, clothing and to be allowed to live full time as our true gender
4. to create a new grooming policy for transgender inmates that would prevent us from being forced to cut our hair.
5. to create a strip search policy that follows the PREA standards—TDCJ is suppose to follow the PREA stands—but I have been told that TDCJ's strip search policy supersedes the PREA standards.

Everything I have requested is recognized by the medical community as effective treatment for Gender dysphoria, yet TDCJ refuses to rescind its harsh policies to bring the existing policies into compliance with national standards.

Medical staff have told that TDCJ is in the process of redoing Its health care plan, etc.

I recently won a grievance claim about guards making me come

out of my cell without a t-shirt on. The response to my step 2 assured me that I would not be required to come out of my cell without

This is a positive sign, and it truly helps me mentally and physically because being forced to come out of my cell without a t-shirt on makes me feel ashamed and it hurts my pride!

I have a legal diagnosis of Gender dysphoria, and I'm on estrogen, Finasteride, and spiranlactone. All this medication will align my body closer to how I see myself. Yet TDCJ refuses to allow me to live as a female! What since does this make? Absolutely none because the medication is changing my body and making my breast grow!

It is my hope that you will become apart of my struggle and help me fight for better health care, and other items that will allow me to live freely as a female. This not only affects me, it affects all of us!

Without your help & support, TDCJ will not change its harsh policies or their attitude towards transgender inmates.

TDCJ's current attitude is anti-transgender, and this can be seen and felt on every level of the system. For an example, I requested commissary to start selling transgender women & men appropriate hygiene and this was the commissary supervisors response: At this time, there is no justifiable reason to carry female products. This offender is not a female!"

Her response shows a level of ignorance to my medical condition

and a total lack of concern for my health and well being!

I understand that my complaints are not life threatening and to some they might sound ridiculous. But it truly affects my life! Plus no injustice or abuse is small. If we cannot come together as one to fight against small discrimination, abuse, etc. How can we fight a serious injustice? A lot of abuse that we face in prison and in society are small. But the Holocaust started out small too and it cost the lives of millions!

I believe in fighting for my rights and making sure that we are safe! But my voice is not being heard because I don't have a strong support group that's willing to stand with me and demand that I receive the care I need.

It's my hope that this zine will change this, and that you make my

struggle—your struggle and take action by calling the Director of TDCJ, state reps, congress, etc. and draw attention to the gross lack of care we are receiving!

You'd be surprised what a telephone call can do!

In closing I want to thank X and the other people that has made this zine possible! Without you, no one would care! And for this, you mean the world to me!

*Love ya  
Vanessa, TX*

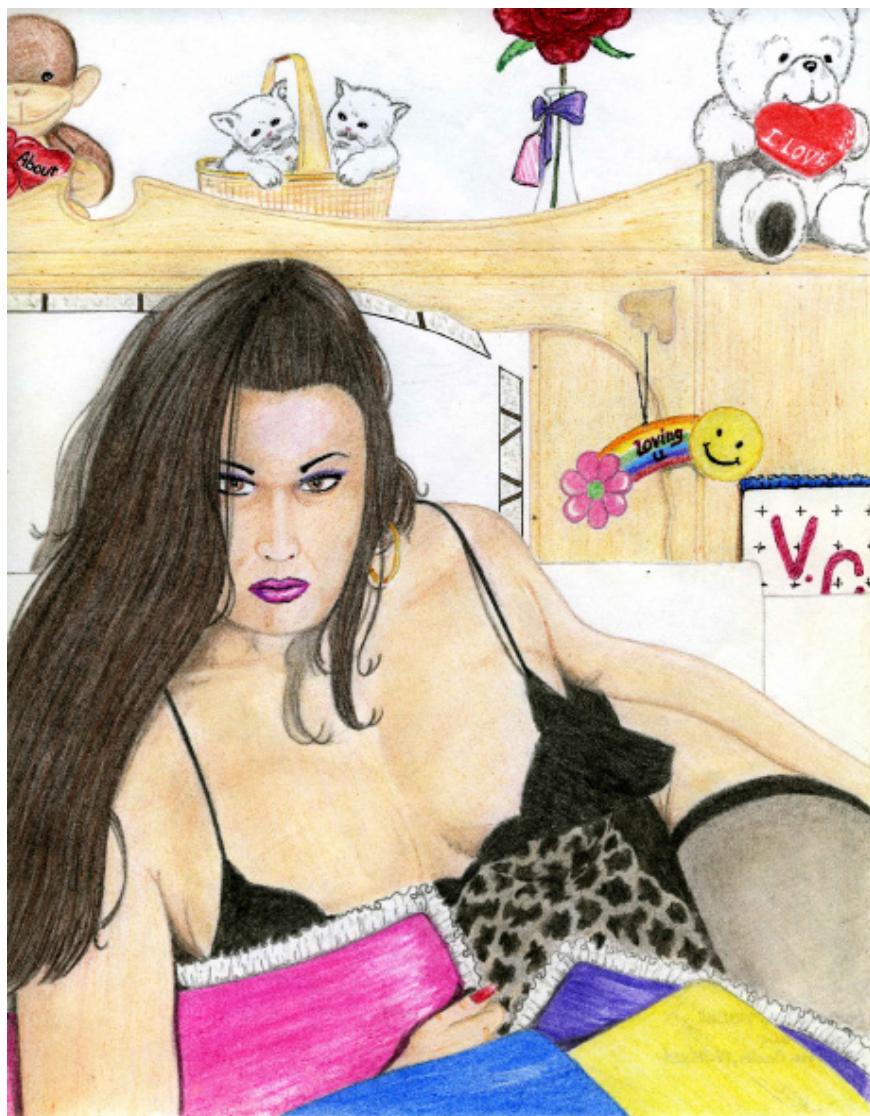
Note: Keep in mind that TDCJ will claim to follow Health care policy G 51.11 which is TDCJ's current health for G.D—But it doesn't follow the standard of care—like the real-life experience, etc.

## **UNTITLED**

*by Freddie Fountain*

While the precision of our aim as a virtuous human race, should always hope to find itself enstated upon an all-aspired target of selfless love and sacrifice. We must, as a matter of forward progression, be ever vigorously on our guard and akin unto a natural and enquickened non-restraint, to abet in the embitterment of all others, whom themselves may so unfortunately find in life of less.

And while neither accolade nor accreditation should find part. It may in times come to be that we may find our just reward within an all to rare, yet utterly beautiful moments glimpse, at a seconds smile....



Vanessa is her name - she's a transwoman at her house where this pic was taken. She's a real good friend. Done with color pencils.

## **HOLDING MY OWN**

*by Joe Salazar*

Who keeps me in their prayers, is what I often wonder  
Who wishes to hold me near with actual sincere

Who wishes I was home instead of being in here  
Who CARES about the journey I face with fear

Fear of never seeing my Son one of these days  
For I live behind bars with guards dressed in gray

Serving life, I may never see the world again  
It's very possible, here's were my life will end

When I'm gone, who will hold me in their hearts  
Who will Remember me when they look up at the stars

Who will Riminese of me if they see me in their dreams  
Really no body. Since that's how it's always been

No one ever gave a fuck about me back then  
And shit will remain the same until my life comes to an end

So it's clear to see, no one will ever be there for me  
Since it's obvious no one has ever been there for me

Because I grew up neglected and abandon by parent's  
Which led me to a life in prison and punishment

I've been walking alone ever since I got here  
So I've learned to hold my own all these lonely years

## **HEROIN**

*by Bubba*

Heroin Fed me all These Lies  
Brainwashed me and Blinded my eyes  
She Took my hand said she'd Guide me The Right Way  
Taking me away from The Light - The Darkness is Where I Stay  
She took me in 5000 Deep and Left me having to find my own way out  
But the way I came is no Longer a Route  
She got me and is now my Master  
Controlling My Mind and Body Making my Life a Disaster  
Making me instantly Sick if I don't obey  
So further into the Darkness I stray  
I'm in too Deep No Way Will I be able to find my way Back  
I'd sell my Soul if I could If only for a Sack  
I screwed up my Entire Life  
Just to make her my Wife  
So Now I Know I can't Live with out you I've tried my Best  
So I'll Tie Off and let you do The Rest  
Feeling you Flow Through each Vein  
Stopping my Heart and Shutting down my Brain  
I Lost the War Nobody Will Ever be able to Touch  
THAT IS THE WAY WITH THE ALMIGHTY HEROIN  
This is a Bad Bitch who Grabs and Don't let Go





Jaguars like to spend middays where they are least annoyed by insects, above ground where air can circulate. Done with color pencils and pen

## **REGRETS**

*by Bubba*

The mirror of my mind is askew for in it I see naught anew  
The visions unto me it casts are only reflections of wreckages past

They bend my and rend my soul upon my heart they take the toll  
They chill my blood they kill my mirth causing me to curse my birth

Sometimes I cry out and other times I rant

I could have

should have

would have

NOW I CANT

## **TELL THEM**

*by Jermaine Hicks*

They say I'm negligent  
But Intelligent  
To those who hate,  
Tell them the world is my Residence  
My mind is so heaven sent,  
Rhythem is my instrument  
My Name is poet  
And my heart is the president  
My Purpose is to Operate  
My life,  
A plan to obviate  
Other poets, I aggravate  
Tell those women who immoderate,  
My walk is to navigate, never negotiate  
I live for self and the love I associate  
Haters I exterminate  
With these poems I invent,  
Tell them I facilitate  
Assemble and fabricate  
The qualittys to fascinate  
My word be the Law, so tell them I federate  
A particle to figurate  
My Realness I demonstrate  
You do what I never do,  
Tell them I educate?  
(My Male Ego)



# **CONTRIBUTORS STATEMENTS AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

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## **CHICO**

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## **JERMAINE HICKS**

*I am a advocate for the fair sentencing laws for juveniles. Ex-gang member, founder of Y.O.U. gang (Youth Organizing Unity), W.A.R., (Wisely Acheiving Resilience) and The Conscious Prisoners Society. I've wrote articles and worked with the Campaign for the fair sentencing of youth and was interviewed by the University of Texas School of Law student, ... through the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition and the Texas Fair Defence Project. I've spent 22 years in prison as a certified juvenile, I'm 36 years old. Working on a mentorship program for at risk-youth through the internet... and highly need your support! Seriously.*

Jermaine Hicks #760638  
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2661 FM 2054  
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## **JOE SALAZAR**

*My background consists of growing up with parents who didn't give a fuck about me. Always neglected. With no love, no morals, or guidance I ended up in prison for the past 16 years, (so far) with nothing to do but be locked down in a single cell twenty four hours a day.*

*I have no friends, no freedom, no family, no nothing. All I know how to do is draw cartoon characters. I wish I could sale my prison-art-work to the public in order to have some funds on my books - in order to support myself with hygenes, art supplies, writing supplies, some food and purchase a book here and there. I want to turn my hobbie (art) into a job to help myself mentally/physically. I don't like being a bum. That's not a good feeling nor is it healthy. But it do brightens my day to know there's sincere people out in the free - world to understand where I come from.*

*I hope people in the free can put an end to the illegal punishment we go through behind bars. Which is why I would like to meet some people and find some friends. "I pray" that I meet an advocate. I want the world to know that not every inmate is guilty of doing something wrong. The crazy part is that the guards commit crimes on the inmate(s) and get away with it. From threatening us, Starving us, Beating us in handcuffs, to Murdering us ("suicide") etc, etc, etc.. Yet none of these guards are prosecuted and convicted. A reason for that is because the media/public/free-world is not aware of the way we live. Those guards need to be exposed to the crimes they are committing. Therefore, I would like to meet some friends caring enough to make a simple concern for me. Sometimes all it takes is a five minute phone call to say someone care's for the being of an inmate.*

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## **MICHAEL COLLIER**

*My submission for your zine comes from what we as LGBT prisoners experience by way of homophobia from other prisoners, guards, and the system itself. Prisons come with their own politics and social hierarchy just like anywhere else. While advances are being made in areas of social acceptability where the LGBT community is concerned in the free world, it's still viewed askance to be other than heterosexual in prison.*

*Words like punk, fag, flip and floper, etc. are used to describe gay and bi or transgender inmates in*

*the Texas prison system and other states as well. So my submission Say it Loud We're LGBT and We're Proud was crafted to address our need as LGBT prisoners to stand up and demand our respect for who we are.*

*As long as we allow ourselves to be discussed as somehow less deserving of our respect simply as human beings we'll continue to be treated poorly. So what I wrote was to encourage others to put an end to that wherever possible by walking with pride for who we are instead of shame.*

*As a bisexual man i'm no less of a man because of my sexuality. None of in the LGBT community are. The homophobia is going to continue until we do something positive to change the attitudes and dispel the egos against us. So i'm greatful for the chance to share my voice on the subject. Thank you.*

*About myself personally I can say that I was convicted of robbery in 2012 and sentenced to 40 years. All my family are either dead or doing time. Moreover i'm interested in ways by which we can at the grass-roots level of prison/society enact a positive change through coordinated efforts against our oppresors.*

*Meaning simply I want to use the inside to create change on the outside and vice versa. There needs to be a formulation of a new solidarity movement which tackles not only the homophobia of that i've outlined here but the ills of capitalism as it's practiced in America. We have over 2 million people in prison and no*

*end in sight yet we can't find a way to stop the drug flow that put so many of us here.*

*The job crisis, housing, miseducation of youth and the ceiling of Americans are the answers of capitalism as run by the top one percent. Yet those answers are to the problems their system creates. And they are poor excuses!*

*Anyway I hope that's helpful - i'm not perfect or ideal. I've made mistakes and poor choices simply working with what I had in the wrong way. So this is about doing it the right way.*

*I think it's reasonable to say that many men in prison have had a gay encounter. More probably than who would currently admit it. While a certain amount of reticents in owning those experiences can be attributed to the classic ideal of what makes a man unmanly the two largest stepping stones here hinge on the gangs and guards.*

*The gangs or family's actively recruit here so they are key in keeping homosexuality taboo. The state fears the solidarity and power of sex. So the two main forces here are primarily sympathetic on this subject though it's quite unspoken.*

*Moreover the gangs feed the prison industrial complex through crime and drugs. While the state uses the prison industrial complex and war on drugs against the lower classes and to bolster and further their economic and political plans.*

*So another angle of my submission is saying to brothers and sisters in here to fight what's keeping the*

*cycle of incarceration really going - the racist homophobic women hating state and it's unwitting allies.*

*When we say fuck you we're gay to these jerks it hurts there plans. I'm tired of being a quiet queer and doing their dirty work. So, say it Loud We're LGBT and Proud!*

Michael Collier #1835403  
Allred Unit  
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## RAGTOP

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## RICCY

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Allred Unit  
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Iowa Park, TX 76367  
**Note:** Address envelope to Ricky Schorovsky, letter to Riccy.

## VAMPIRE

*My Background... is Heavy Metal - Techno-Nerd - Blacksheep-Professional. Its the only way I can describe myself other than: Cool Mother Fucker! [vampire emoji] I identify.. as Vampire. I'm not hung up on*

*identifying... so other than Vampire, its inconsequential... and really should keep its mysterious allure. What inspired me is... "my desire for other to value dignity... self-respect, and attempt to transcend the caveman ideologies they've enslaved themselves to. People should not blindly bind their minds to non-sensical mental constructs... as it is a blemish on the species... and a complete embarrassment.*

Robert McKay #1182106  
1182106 Coffield Unit  
2661 FM 2054  
Tennessee Colony, TX 75884  
**Note:** Address envelope to Robert "Vampire" McKay, letter to Vampire.

## VANESSA

*My name is Vanessa. I'm truly grateful to have the opportunity to participate in this program to share my struggles and please for help with you! I'm truly in debt to Xylah Gray who was kind enough to write and ask me to participate in this zine. Without wonderful people like X and you, our lives in prison would be a nightmare for real! So thanks!*

Scott Gibson #699888  
A. Hughes Unit  
Rt 2 Box 4400  
Gatesville, TX 76597  
**Note:** Address envelope to Scott "Vanessa" Gibson, letter to Vanessa.

# **GENERAL & LGBTQ RESOURCES FOR PRISONERS**

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## **FREE BOOKS AND LITERATURE**

### **Inside Books Project**

c/o 12th Street Books  
827 West 12th Street  
Austin, Texas 78701

You may write to Inside Books Project once every 3 months. In your letter, make sure to include some categories of the types of books you are interested in (for example: fiction, educational, history, languages, LGBTQ, radical politics/activism, etc.) IBP also has a complete resource guide you may request. Be patient, it may take a few months to hear back as they serve all of Texas.

## **LEGAL RESOURCES AND INFO**

### **Prison Justice League**

PJL ATTN: Special Legal Counsel Brian McGiverin  
1405 Montopolis Drive  
Austin, TX 78741

The PJL works to improve the conditions in Texas prisons through litigation, advocacy, and by empowering our members. We address the needs of prisoners in Texas, challenge institutions of punishment and hold them accountable for their actions, and service choice for prisoners in communities most affected by the criminal justice system.

### **Prison Health News**

c/o Philadelphia FIGHT  
1233 Locust Street 5th floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
Free monthly newsletter about prisoners' and ex-prisoners' health; published by ex-cons.

### **Prison Legal News**

P.O Box 2420,  
West Brattleboro, VT 05303

A monthly 56 Page magazine with summaries and analysis of recent national and local court decisions on prisoner rights, from the prisoner perspective, articles from attorneys, including how-to litigation advice, news of prison-related struggle and activism in the United States and around the world, and distributes a wide variety of legal self help and criminal justice books. \$24.00 a year.

### **Black and Pink Collective**

614 Columbia Rd  
Dorchester, MA 02125  
[www.blackandpink.org](http://www.blackandpink.org)

Provides a free monthly newsletter of prisoner written material, hosts an online listing of penpals, coordinates an art program, provides direct advocacy when possible, and offers religious and erotic materials upon request.

### **Gay Buddhist Fellowship**

PMB 456  
2215-R Market Street  
San Francisco, CA 94114  
[www.gaybuddhist.org](http://www.gaybuddhist.org)

Supports Buddhist practice in the gay men's community. Monthly newsletter.

### **International Foundation For Gender Education**

P.O. Box 540229  
Waltham, MA 02454-0229  
(781) 894-8340  
(781) 899-2212  
[info@ifge.org](mailto:info@ifge.org)  
[ifge.org](http://ifge.org)

Resources, books to promote understanding and acceptance of all sexual orientations.

### **National Center for Transgender Equality**

1325 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Suite 700  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
(202) 903-0112  
[transequality.org](http://transequality.org)  
Dedicated to advancing the equality of transgender people through

advocacy, collaboration and empowerment.

### **Prisoner Correspondence Project**

QPIRG Concordia

c/o Concordia University,

1455 de Maisonneuve O

Montreal, QC H3G 1M8

[info@prisoner correspondenceproject.com](mailto:info@prisoner correspondenceproject.com)

[www.prisoner correspondenceproject.com](http://www.prisoner correspondenceproject.com)

Resource program for lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender inmates.

### **Sinister Wisdom INC**

PO Box 3252

Berkeley CA 94703

[www.sinisterwisdom.org](http://www.sinisterwisdom.org)

Lesbian literary journal free to women in prisons and mental institutions.

### **Sylvia Rivera Law Project**

147 W 24th St, 5th Floor

New York NY 10011

(212) 337-8550

[info@srlp.org](mailto:info@srlp.org)

[srlp.org](http://srlp.org)

Provides direct representation for low income transgender people and transgender people of color, including a "Prisoner Rights Project" that assists with the following areas:

- Name Changes
- Assistance Getting Trans-affirming health care
- Assistance with Safety Issues
- Advocacy for gender-affirming placement and conditions
- Re-Entry Assistance
- Fingerprinting and criminal history check

**Transgender, Gender Variant & Intersex Justice Project (TGIJP)**

1230 Market Street

PMB 705

San Francisco, CA 94102(415) 252-1444

[www.tgijp.org](http://www.tgijp.org)

Offers advice and resources to transgender people. Also offers newsletter, resource guide and survival guide for transgendered prisoners.

**Tranzmission Prison Books**

P.O. Box 1874

Asheville, NC 28801

Offers free books and resources to LGBT inmates.

**Prison Yoga Project: A Path for Healing and Recovery**

P.O. Box 415

Bolinas, CA 94924

[givebackyoga.org/shop/prison-yoga-project-a-path-for-healing-and-recovery](http://givebackyoga.org/shop/prison-yoga-project-a-path-for-healing-and-recovery)

Free 100-page yoga manual written especially for people in prison. Write for a free copy. Focuses on the self-reflection and personal discipline. The book contains guides for physical practice (asana), breathing (pranayama) and meditation (dyhana).

**Texas Association Against Sexual Assault**

6200 La Calma Drive, Suite 110

Austin, TX 78752

Office: (512) 474-7190

Toll-free 24-hour Hotline: (800) 656-4679

[www.taasa.org](http://www.taasa.org)

Founded to assist sexual assault survivors and to create a Texas free from sexual violence. Connects survivors to rape crisis centers around Texas.

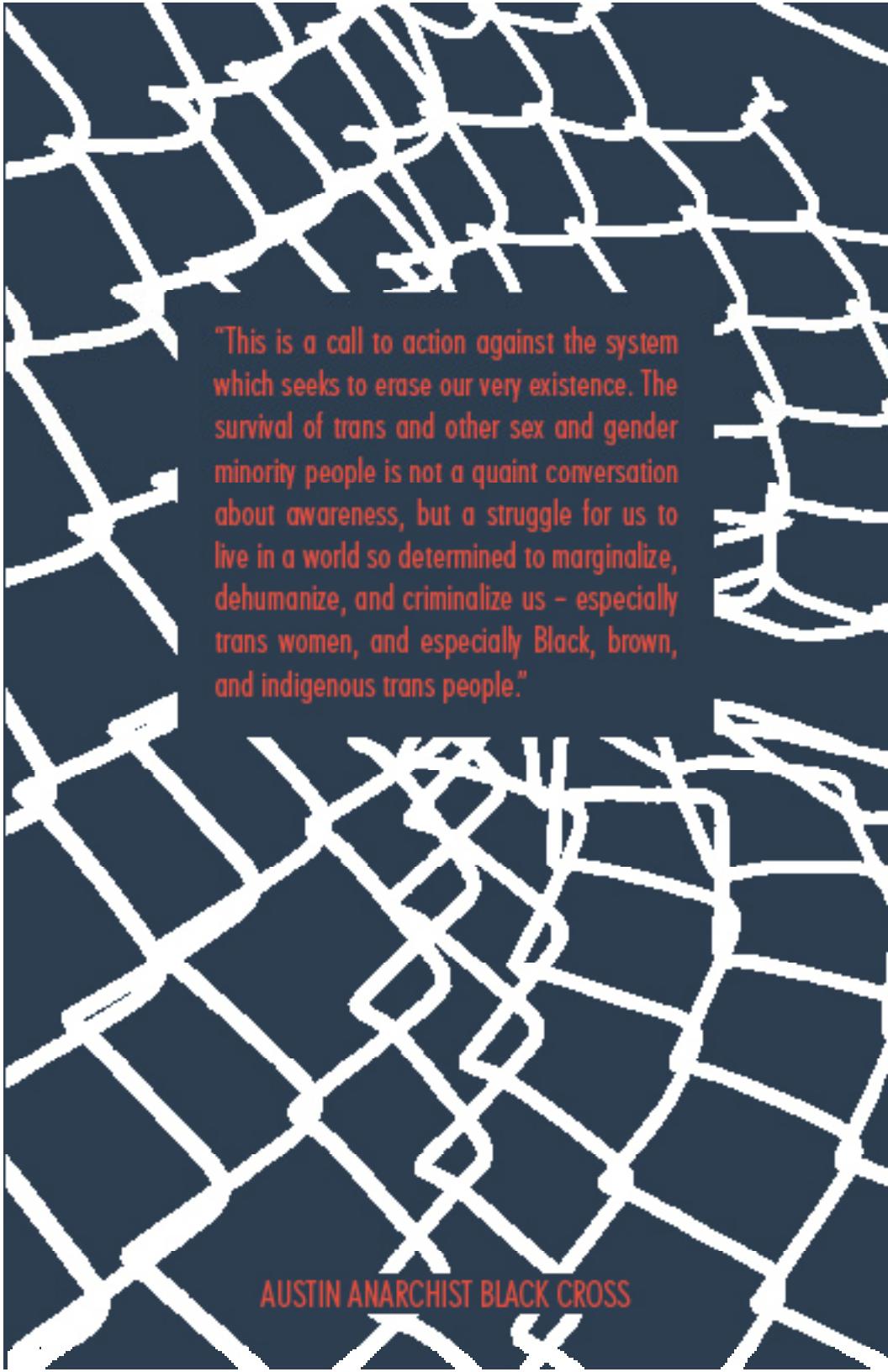


my body is  
trapped in here,  
but my heart  
is with you  
still fighting  
out there...

-Marius  
Mason

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this zine, who were brave enough to share their artwork and voices. Thank you to those involved in the work to put this zine together, Black & Pink Collective for helping us connect with folks on the inside, Inside Books Project for letting us republish part of their resource guide, and anyone who visualizes a world without bars.

In Struggle and Solidarity,  
Austin Anarchist Black Cross



"This is a call to action against the system which seeks to erase our very existence. The survival of trans and other sex and gender minority people is not a quaint conversation about awareness, but a struggle for us to live in a world so determined to marginalize, dehumanize, and criminalize us – especially trans women, and especially Black, brown, and indigenous trans people."

AUSTIN ANARCHIST BLACK CROSS